



## **United States Mission to the OSCE**

### **Statement in Response to the ODIHR Director's Report on the HDIM**

As prepared for delivery by Ambassador Julie Finley  
to the Permanent Council, Vienna  
October 20, 2005

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you also Ambassador Strohal, for your comprehensive report on the Human Dimension Implementation Meeting. The United States thanks ODIHR for organizing a successful meeting, whose full agenda allowed serious review of the implementation of OSCE Human Dimension commitments in all participating States. Ambassador Strohal, we salute you also for your tireless energy, your commitment, and especially for your broad and thoughtful consideration and your fine leadership of ODIHR.

This follow-up discussion here in the Permanent Council is extremely important, as it is a direct link between issues raised at the HDIM and action in the OSCE. Of course, the main responsibility for implementation of our OSCE commitments lies with our own governments, and we hope follow-up action will also be taken in capitals. Mr. Chairman, because this issue is so important, the United States will circulate a longer written statement. As I recall, the modalities for the HDIM say that there should be a separate PC devoted to discussion of follow-up, but in the spirit of cooperation, for the past couple of years we have agreed to have it as an agenda item in this very busy time of year.

We thank those other States who actively participated in the HDIM at senior and expert levels. The success of the HDIM hinges largely on the participation of officials who are in a position to follow-up on issues after they return home. We also greatly appreciate the contributions of a record number of NGOs in this year's HDIM, and we take very seriously the concerns that these citizens raised about the human rights situation in their countries.

We do regret that the time allocated to some topics was not sufficient to accommodate all participants who wanted to speak. In particular, the session on national minorities and on Roma and Sinti needed more time. In general, however, the agenda was better organized this year, and we believe it was an improvement to intersperse special topic days with regular sessions. We would like to see more preparation and thought given to the agendas for the special topic days next year.

In the 1991 Moscow Document we agreed that our human dimension commitments are a matter of international concern. As one speaker at the HDIM pointed out, "Friends must be honest with each other" when they see areas for improvement of human rights and democracy.

Discussions at the HDIM brought out several areas on which we believe the OSCE should focus Human Dimension events in 2006. Leading up to a comprehensive examination of democratic institutions at next year's HDIM, the U.S. would support supplementary

meetings on judicial reform and independence, combating corruption, strengthening civil society and promoting democratic governance.

Discussions on tolerance and non-discrimination showed that OSCE States have come a long way over the past three years. However, more remains to be done, and for this reason the U.S. supports the reappointment of the three Personal Representatives on tolerance – with their current portfolios and with the autonomy and resources they need to operate – in 2006.

We also support having high-level OSCE conferences on the model of Cordoba in 2007 and 2009, with two expert-level meetings on regional or thematic topics in 2006.

The United States agrees with Ambassador Strohal's view that election observation is "a crucial tool to evaluate progress in the democratic process."

We believe that the OSCE region is fortunate to have developed comprehensive, clear standards against which to observe elections, and mechanisms that allow us to do so impartially, professionally and transparently. We agree with the overwhelming majority of HDIM participants who voiced their confidence in OSCE election observation, assessment and assistance and reaffirmed the sanctity of our existing election commitments. We encourage all participating States to support fully ODIHR's observation missions this fall in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan.

We thank Ambassador Strohal for his briefing yesterday on the issue of Copenhagen Plus. While we are prepared to look at ways that minor updating can further improve the Copenhagen document, it is our view that the existing commitments are already quite comprehensive. In light of how well they have served us, we see no need to rush on this matter.

The United States shares the view expressed by a number of NGOs at the HDIM that organizations that criticize the OSCE's widely-emulated election observation methodology can only hope to be taken seriously if they clearly and transparently explain their own methodologies and practices, making them subject to the same kind of scrutiny they expect of ODIHR.

We believe an upcoming meeting on election observation to be organized by ODIHR at the Chair's request would provide an opportunity for such organizations, including the CIS, to explain how they come to their findings; recruit, deploy and promote diversity of election mission heads and observers; and avoid conflicts-of-interest and bias. We also hope this meeting will emphasize the vital role of domestic observer organizations.

The U.S. strongly supports many of the recommendations made concerning promoting the role of women in conflict management and in preventing violence against women and combating trafficking in human beings. We believe a priority should be to ensure that our own peacekeeping troops and international mission members do not contribute to trafficking or engage in sexual exploitation or abuse. Enforcement of policies against individual perpetrators ultimately remains the responsibility of each troop-contributing country, and we urge all OSCE participating States to review the sufficiency of national laws to ensure that a basis exists to enforce policies against exploitation, abuse and

trafficking. We will shortly be introducing a draft ministerial decision concerning this issue.

We noted that many participants raised the issue of increasing harassment of human rights defenders in some countries. This trend is unacceptable, and we call on all States to ensure that civil society can participate freely and without fear of reprisals.

In particular, we were alarmed by credible reports of a general crackdown on human rights defenders and journalists in Uzbekistan following the tragic May events in Andijon. We also are concerned about the conduct of related trials currently taking place and look forward to ODIHR reports from observers there. The international community has been unable to appropriately respond to this situation, and we continue to call for an independent international investigation of the events. We took note of the many calls made at the HDIM for the use of the Moscow Mechanism to trigger such an investigation. We also noted with regret that Uzbekistan did not participate visibly in the HDIM working sessions.

We welcome the participation of Turkmenistan for the first time in years and hope that this signals an increased willingness to engage on Human Dimension issues. We remain concerned by widespread human rights violations in that country. We would like to stress again the critical importance of allowing the ICRC to visit prisons and we urge the Government of Turkmenistan to provide the ICRC access to all its prisoners without further delay or restrictions and to immediately provide information on and access to those arrested in connection with the events of November 2002, including our former OSCE colleague, Batyr Berdiev. It is cruel and callous that the family members of these individuals have not even been able to confirm whether these individuals are dead or alive.

We highlighted our concerns that the Government of Belarus has enacted legislation amounting to a restriction of the activities of NGOs, independent media, political parties, trade unions and religious groups. Attempts to stifle the besieged independent media in Belarus have only intensified, with suspension of newspapers, crippling fines and specious libel suites to muzzle dissenting voices.

Mr. Chairman, it is difficult to sum up two weeks of hard work in just a few minutes. We have tried to highlight some of the issues that we believe should be priorities for the OSCE and for our governments in the coming months. We look forward to working with others to accomplish the main goal of the HDIM: strengthen the implementation of our OSCE Human Dimension commitments.

Security, which is part of the name of this organization, does not refer simply to force and sophisticated weaponry; it refers to the security of human rights, it refers to the security of economic opportunity, it refers to the security of environmental opportunity. All of these issues are under one security umbrella and I think we all need to remember that.

Thank you.